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Monday, 31 March 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 132 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/62/657/Add.5 and 6)

The Acting President: Before turning to the item on our agenda, I would like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/62/657/Add.5 and 6, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/62/657 and Add.1 to 4, Dominica and Paraguay have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in these documents?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 46

Global road safety crisis

Note by the Secretary-General (A/62/257)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.43)

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to the representative of Oman to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.43.

Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman): Five years ago, during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, I stood before this Assembly to introduce resolution 57/309 on the global road safety crisis. It was a very modest resolution; all it asked was a report on the global road safety crisis from the Secretary-General for consideration by the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We have come a long way since then. The Assembly had its first-ever debate on road safety at its fifty-eighth session, and Members were unanimous in emphasizing that road traffic injuries posed a global public health crisis that required urgent action at the national and international levels.

A major development, which took place in April 2004, was the launching of the "World report on road traffic injury prevention" by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank. The report served as both an advocacy tool and a technical document, containing six major recommendations on what countries can do to address the problem of road traffic injuries. Also at the fifty-eighth session, the Assembly recognized the need for the United Nations system to support efforts to address the global road safety crisis, and it invited WHO, working in close cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, to act as coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system.

I thank the Secretary-General for transmitting to us the report contained in document A/62/257 on improving global road safety, prepared by WHO and the regional commissions and other partners of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration. I would

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like to thank members of the Collaboration, under the able guidance of WHO, who have contributed so much to the contents of the report.

The report provides an update on the status of the implementation of the recommendations made in resolution 60/5 on improving global road safety. It describes how efforts made at the international level have served to increase awareness about road safety. It proposes a number of recommendations for consideration by the Assembly that would facilitate the implementation of effective interventions known to improve road safety at the national level.

In April 2007, WHO and the United Nations regional commissions organized the first United Nations Global Road Safety Week to serve as a platform for global, regional and national activities to raise awareness about road safety issues. The Week also focused on young road users, highlighting the risks for children and young people. The World Youth Assembly for Road Safety was the key global event of the Week, which brought together over 400 young people from 100 countries to share experiences and create a global network of young road safety advocates. The young delegates developed and adopted a declaration, called the Youth Declaration for Road Safety. Also held during the Week was the second Stakeholders' Forum for Global Road Safety, organized by the Global Road Safety Forum, which brought together participants from Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

I would be remiss if I did not compliment the United Nations regional commissions and their subsidiary bodies for increasing their road safety activities and advocating for increased political commitment to road safety.

The Economic Commission for Europe continues to advocate global action in the elaboration of safety-related global technical vehicle regulations and amendments to the Convention on Road Traffic and the Convention on Road Signs and Signals.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held a Ministerial Conference on Transport in Busan, Republic of Korea, and adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific.

The Economic Commission for Africa and WHO jointly organized an African road safety conference in Accra, during which the delegates adopted a declaration that committed ministers to working together to stop the growing epidemic of death and injuries on African roads.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean held its first Latin American and Caribbean Road Safety Stakeholders Forum in San José in 2006. Participants there adopted the Declaration of San José.

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and WHO jointly organized a regional training course for ministry of health officials in Cairo in 2006.

Elsewhere, the Commission for Global Road Safety, under the able leadership of Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, issued the landmark Make Roads Safe report, which included a proposal for the holding of a ministerial conference on road safety. The Make Roads Safe report frames road safety as an issue in sustainable development and clearly illustrates the direct link between safe roads and the effective delivery of many of the Millennium Development Goals. It also highlights the need for road infrastructure development projects, backed by the G8, to include a viable road safety component.

But, despite that progress, there is a growing gap between the developed countries and developing and transitional countries, where the problem is, unfortunately, getting worse. If we cannot accelerate our response to the epidemic of road traffic deaths in low- and middle-income countries by mobilizing more effective enforcement, building safer roadways, changing road user behaviours and providing better care, we will lose tens of millions of lives before those problems turn the corner and start on a downward curve. Therefore, we need a number of sustained and coordinated global initiatives to help close that gap. Just as a rising tide lifts all boats, those initiatives can move us forward on all fronts together.

One of the areas in which substantial progress has been made is the development of the first funding mechanism designed to support capacity-building and provide technical support for road safety at the global, regional and country levels. I commend the World Bank on its initiative to establish the Global Road Safety Facility, a funding mechanism that would support the implementation of the recommendations contained in the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury*

Prevention. I thank the Governments of Australia, the Netherlands and Sweden and the FIA Foundation for their financial support to the Facility.

Here, I would like to point to the steps implemented by the Government of Oman at the national level. Those include the enactment of legislation, the establishment of a national road safety agency, updating comprehensive regulations to meet the needs of the injured and their rehabilitation, and the creation of a registry to obtain detailed information on the consequences of injuries with the aim of minimizing the crisis and with the ultimate goal of creating for our citizens an environment that is conducive to achieving further social and economic development. The Royal Oman Police has organized and participated in a number of events in its continuing efforts to raise greater awareness of road safety issues. It has participated in both the Gulf Cooperation Council Road Safety Week and in the Arab Road Safety Week.

The Directorate-General for Traffic of the Royal Oman Police established in 2006 the Road Safety Institute, whose mission is to train traffic officers. The Institute conducts a number of training programmes for driving instructors, taxi drivers and public transportation drivers. It also conducts programmes on first aid, administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation and defensive driving. The Institute has organized 18 conferences and events relating to road safety, and two regional conferences were held at the Institute in 2006.

To ensure the safety of drivers and pedestrians alike, the Royal Oman Police is sparing no effort in making sure that traffic regulations are complied with. As speed is the major cause of road crashes, resulting in 53 per cent of crashes in Oman, the Royal Oman Police has installed high-quality fixed-speed radars on all lit dual carriageways, and mobile speed radars have been provided to all police departments in the provinces and regions of Oman. Since the installation of the speed radars, there has been a significant decrease in the rate of speed violations.

The Royal Oman Police is also concerned about the road worthiness of vehicles and has established vehicle technical inspection stations in all the regions of Oman. Those stations are equipped with the most modern technology and systems used in vehicle inspections.

With the increase in the number of vehicles and road users, it is important that rules and regulations be kept in line with accelerating developments in all aspects of life. Traffic laws have been amended to address new and unfamiliar patterns of traffic behaviour.

On behalf of the sponsors — Albania, Argentina, Austria, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Greece, Iceland, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, the Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, the Sudan, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, Yemen and Oman — I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/62/L.43, on which my delegation held a number of consultation meetings with other Member States in order to arrive at a consensus.

The draft builds on the practical recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/62/257. In its preambular part, the draft resolution underlines the importance for Member States to continue using the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* as a framework for road safety efforts. It commends the World Health Organization (WHO) for its role in implementing the mandate conferred upon it by the General Assembly to coordinate road safety issues within the United Nations system. It recognizes the important contribution of the United Nations regional commissions in helping the WHO to carry out its mandate. It commends the World Bank for its initiative in establishing the Global Road Safety Facility, expresses concern at the continued increase in road traffic fatalities and injuries, and reaffirms the need for further strengthening of international cooperation.

The time has come for our ministers and other Government officials with responsibilities for transport, health, education, safety and law enforcement to meet to discuss this issue and consider the progress made so far and what remains to be done. Operative paragraph 7 welcomes the offer of the Government of the Russian Federation to host the first ministerial conference on road safety, to be held in 2009. We hope that that important event will bring together ministers responsible for transport, health,

education and law enforcement to exchange views and discuss progress in implementing the recommendations of the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* and General Assembly resolutions on improving global road safety.

Here, I would like to offer my thanks and gratitude to the Government of the Russian Federation for its generous offer and for the leading role it is playing in raising awareness of the road safety issue.

Since the issuance of the draft resolution, the following additional countries have joined the list of sponsors: Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Djibouti, Fiji, Finland, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Monaco, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Paraguay, Poland, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the delegation of the Russian Federation and the representatives who participated in the many informal meetings we held and who offered constructive suggestions, amendments, advice and support. To all of them, I offer many, many thanks.

I am honoured to recommend draft resolution A/62/L.43 for adoption by the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation, Mr. Victor Kiryanov, Chief State Inspector of Traffic Safety.

Mr. Kiryanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation, along with a number of other countries, has submitted to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly a draft resolution entitled "Improving global road safety" (A/62/L.43). We hope that it will enjoy the Assembly's support, because the issue of road safety is now more important than ever and requires our constant attention.

Interaction in the field of road traffic safety has lately become a priority area of international cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels and is becoming an important item on the agendas of the United Nations and other international organizations. That is due to the growing use of vehicles throughout the world and, as a result, an increase in the number of road accidents.

United Nations data shows that each year nearly 1.2 million people die and millions are injured or disabled as a result of road accidents. Besides economic and social costs for individuals and their families, road traffic injuries place an onerous burden on public health-care services. Each year, the costs associated with road traffic injuries in the world amount to hundreds of billions of dollars, and they continue to increase.

Reducing the number of road traffic injuries is one of the necessary preconditions for successful socio-economic development, achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, ultimately, for ordinary people to feel safe and secure when travelling by road, and that concerns all road users — both drivers and pedestrians.

This problem is extremely urgent for the Russian Federation. The road safety situation remains difficult in our country. A high accident rate is in many respects caused by the constantly growing mobility of the population, with a shift from public to private transportation and a growing disproportion between a rise in the number of automobiles and the development of the street and road network. This situation leads to worsening traffic and environmental conditions, congestion, an increase in fuel consumption and growth in the number of road accidents.

In his annual address to the Federal Assembly in 2007, the President of the Russian Federation presented the issue of ensuring road safety as a priority development goal for our country. The Government of the Russian Federation has adopted a special programme entitled "Improved Road Safety for 2006-2012". In our country as a whole, activities in this area have been intensified. All regions of Russia have adopted appropriate programmes on road safety. Their financing has also been increased.

The Russian Federation has traditionally been an active participant in multilateral efforts in the field of road safety. We were among those who initiated regular consideration of the topic of overcoming the global road safety crisis at the General Assembly of the United Nations. In particular, Russia was the first to inform the international community about the implementation measures of the relevant resolution of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

The international community highly commended the efforts of the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety of the Inland Transport Committee of the Economic Commission for Europe. Since March 2006, that working party has been headed by a representative from Russia. The role of this body of the United Nations system as an effective tool of international legal regulation in this area was stressed welcomed in resolution 60/5 (A/Res/60/5, para. 6).

We took an active part at both the international and national levels in the preparation and holding of the first United Nations Global Road Safety Week, which focused on young road users. The Russian Automobile Federation became a member of the Global Road Safety Partnership, the major conference of which also took place in Moscow recently.

In 2006, Lord Robertson, Chairman of the Commission for Global Road Safety, whose active work to raise public awareness of the issue of preventing road accidents in the world merits great respect and our full support, proposed holding the first international conference on road safety. It is planned to focus this event on a comprehensive discussion of the road safety situation throughout the world and its influence on socio-economic development and countries' implementation and attainment of the MDGs. In particular, it is planned to review the progress of countries' implementation of the recommendations of the World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention and also to determine ways to step up international cooperation.

The Russian Federation has decided to present an initiative to hold the first global high-level conference on road safety in 2009 in Moscow, together with other actors interested in international cooperation in the area of road safety. The draft resolution being considered today refers to this and other initiatives.

For my part, as someone responsible for ensuring road safety in Russia, I would like to stress our determination to make vigorous efforts to improve the situation in this area and to assist in the strengthening of international cooperation everywhere, to ensure sharing of experience and knowledge, coordination of joint work, elaboration of common rules and standards, and finally, improving the level of the road safety and the quality of life for all road users.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica, Her Excellency, Mrs. Karla González, Minister of Public Works and Transportation.

Mrs. González (Costa Rica): I want to thank the Assembly for the privilege of addressing this sixty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Roads are a big part of my responsibilities in the Ministry of Transport. The daily life of each person depends on the roads — to get to school, to work or to the health centre; to facilitate business, agriculture and trade; and to provide the jobs that can lead people out of poverty.

In developing countries like Costa Rica, even simple journeys are hazards. Half of the people killed or badly hurt in road crashes are simply walking. One in ten is killed on bicycles. The death rate of people simply riding in vehicles is also high. Overall, a Costa Rican is more than three times likely to die in a sudden violent road crash than a Northern European. This state of affairs is unacceptable.

Costa Rica is well known for non-violence. We abolished our army 50 years ago. Our president, Óscar Arias, won a Nobel Peace Prize for his work in bringing conflicts to a close in our region. He now sees that ending the violence on our roads would be an even greater prize. So he is using his international standing to mobilize action against the violence of road crashes in Latin America.

In Costa Rica, we look for good international advice. We are acting to tackle the key risk factors in road crashes — poorly designed roadways, failure to use safety belts and helmets, drunk driving and excessive speed. Costa Rica believes deeply in constitutional rights and individual freedom. In the past, some had argued that an individual had the right to decide if he or she wanted to protect himself or herself by using a seat belt and that the law should not interfere with such rights. In 2003, we as Governments decided that civil society had elected us to represent and protect its rights. It was time for us to protect ourselves from our worst enemy — our freedom to decide not to protect ourselves. We fought, argued and persuaded. We changed the law on seat belt use and we brought the work of the police and road safety education together. We created a campaign that spoke to our people in a language that they could understand, saying: "For the sake of the people you love, and for those who love you, wear a seat belt."

The forces of the new law and emotion worked together. The rate of seat belt usage rose from around 20 per cent to over 80 per cent — better than the rates in the United States and many European countries at that time. The automobile death rate fell by about 30 per cent. It was, and is, extremely important to realize that we have the tools and ability to reduce these death rates. If we try hard, we can do it.

We were grateful for the help from the international community, especially from the FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society. We are pleased that our success is being repeated elsewhere.

The Government of President Arias is now tackling another major issue, our roads. Our roads are in bad condition. The same rain that lures tourists to visit the beautiful wildlife and rain forests of Costa Rica is the same rainwater that washes away our roads. For the past 10 years, our roads have been neglected in terms of investment and maintenance. The national budget for roads has been meagre. That has been changing in recent years. For the first time, the Government has decided to dedicate all the resources provided by our fuel-tax law to maintaining our roads. Nevertheless, the damage was so extensive that we could spend the entire budget just patching and painting the roads.

It must be difficult for those in developed countries to imagine the problems that our engineers face. In well-run developed countries, professionals debate various tactics to achieve the lowest whole-life cost of road treatment over the next 20 or 40 years. In Costa Rica, we have more than 30,000 kilometres of roads. We struggle to find the money to keep them in good condition and to build new ones. It is very hard to run a programme to improve the situation, when money is scarce and the road network is so big. Unfortunately, we believe that scenario is the same in most developing countries. But despite our circumstances, we have to change the priorities.

When thinking about road safety, behaviour is key. But there is another key, which depends only upon Governments and decision-makers, namely, infrastructure. If Governments have the money to build new roads, they certainly must take care of the safety component. It is no longer acceptable to spend scarce money to build bigger or longer roads, if we are not also investing money to make our roads safer.

We have a vision, and we are looking ahead, anticipating the needs for the next two decades. Global health equity means that people everywhere — in rich countries and poor ones — have access to vaccines. Global road safety equity means that people everywhere have access not to roads, as we used to believe, but to safe roads, as we believe today.

On 8 May 2006, as the first decision of the new Arias Government, the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation, under my command, decreed that we would evaluate our roads, both old and new, in terms of safety. In the past, when we spent money improving roads, we often increased casualties. Speeds rose but the roads were not safely designed. International institutions were short-sighted as well. Too many believed that tackling health, education and poverty could be done, while cutting back on basics.

Now everyone recognizes that we need safe, clean and affordable transport. We need maintenance budgets that are sustainable. We need budgets that will let us surface roads to keep water out today, and not spend 10 times more in major reconstruction tomorrow. We need simple and affordable safety features, which would be expected in a developed country, such as footpaths and safe crossing points, traffic management in villages, safety fencing, safe road and junction layouts, bike paths and uphill lanes. We know that roundabouts and centre and side barriers can reduce traffic fatalities by 90 per cent. Those interventions are as effective as any medicine. They can be our road safety vaccines.

Last year, Costa Rica won a place in the International Road Assessment Programme (IRAP). Costa Rica is one of a handful of developing countries worldwide whose roads were inspected as part of a pilot programme. Working with my Ministry, the road assessment team identified about 2,800 kilometres of road where deaths and serious injuries are concentrated. They then inspected those roads to determine what could be fixed quickly and affordably. Right now, we are studying IRAP's report and recommendations on the roads most in need of safety treatment, if money can be found.

The IRAP report for Costa Rica does more than suggest where thousands and thousands of deaths and serious injuries could be prevented over the years ahead by simple measures such as foot paths, safe crossing points and safety barriers. As a road safety

minister, I am quite convinced that common sense measures based on the systematic measurement of problems are what is needed. However, the report goes on to give the figures that finance ministers and development banks need. Countries such as Costa Rica lose about 2 to 3 per cent of gross domestic product to road crashes. The report shows how treating the roads where serious crashes are concentrated can provide an economic payback of 10 times the money invested. I am therefore pleased that road assessment is recognized in today's draft resolution.

Infrastructure is part of the safety system where Governments have the greatest ability to save lives and prevent injuries. On the other hand, it is also the most expensive part, the part where major investments are required. Let me therefore conclude with a question. Assuming the political will exists to take action, are we going to be able to find the international financing community ready to take those actions and become part of the solution?

With adequate support from developed nations, the World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility — which is also referred to in the historic draft resolution before us today — has the potential to transform this epidemic and provide road safety for everyone. I suspect that many countries are in the same position as Costa Rica. With investment from the international community, there is much we can do for many.

On behalf of my country and all the developing countries of our region, I am here to attest that we have learned from our mistakes. We think that we now know the way. We have decided to tear down all political barriers and obstacles, the mental schemes that have prevented us from changing. We will fight and we will prevail. If we can find the funding, we are ready to take action.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

If we want to make significant progress in regard to violence in our countries, we need to start with our roads.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Honourable Michael Henry, Minister of Transport and Works of Jamaica.

Mr. Henry (Jamaica): Permit me to convey greetings from our Prime Minister, the Honourable Bruce Golding, who was invited to address the Assembly. He is unavoidably absent due to prior commitments.

Allow me also, at the outset, to express my appreciation of the privilege of addressing the General Assembly at its sixty-second session in my capacity as Minister with portfolio responsibility for transport on a matter that we consider to be of significant national importance.

The Jamaican delegation welcomes the report transmitted in document A/62/257, prepared by the World Health Organization (WHO) in consultation with the regional commissions and other partners of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration. Our support for draft resolution A/62/L.43 is reflected in our sponsorship of the text and is a signal of our desire that global road safety issues be addressed, with a further strengthening of international cooperation and taking into account the needs of developing countries.

In Jamaica, the issue of road safety is given priority attention on our national agenda. The Prime Minister assumes the lead role as Chair of the National Road Safety Council, a body with overarching responsibilities for road safety matters in the country. That in itself demonstrates the seriousness of my Government's commitment to bring attention to this issue at the highest level. In this arrangement, the Government, the private sector and academia collaborate for the singular purpose of establishing measures to enhance road safety. We are convinced that without this political will, the problem will only be exacerbated and spiral out of control.

This multisector approach has reduced our fatality rate from road traffic injuries from a high of 17.8 per 100,000 of the population to a low of 11.4 per 100,000 in 1999, a situation which at that time compared favourably with many developed countries. Unfortunately, our fatality rate has again climbed to unacceptable levels, peaking at 15.6 per 100,000 in 2002. With a concerted effort, there was a further reduction to 12.1 in 2005.

Jamaica is of the view that stopping this epidemic will take more than any one country can grapple with. Thus, at the regional level, we participate fully in the Latin American and Caribbean Road Safety Forum, which is sustained by the Global Road Safety Forum, a non-governmental agency committed to advocacy and collaboration. The Latin American and Caribbean Forum brings together government representatives

from the transportation, health, law enforcement and education sectors, while mobilizing relevant regional and international organizations with a view to greater collaboration and efforts to curtail — if not eliminate — the epidemic of death on our respective roadways.

Under the leadership of Costa Rica, the Forum is now in the final stages of developing a charter that upon adoption will serve as a signpost — pun intended — for the guidance of the regional committee to fulfil its mandate within the framework of wider collaboration and cooperation to make roads safer for the people of Latin America and the Caribbean.

According to WHO, more than 85 per cent of road traffic injuries occur in low- and middle-income countries, a fact that we cannot ignore. One notable consequence of this epidemic is what I would like to describe as a stifling effect that imposes a huge economic burden on developing countries and economies, particularly small and vulnerable economies such as that of Jamaica, where it accounts for 1 to 2 per cent of the gross domestic product. This figure, according to WHO, is compiled with a total bilateral overseas aid contributed by the industrial countries. We are reliably informed by those who carry out research on the burden of road traffic injuries that this staggering effect on GDP represents only half of the story; as that figure only represents lost productivity.

As part of the new political Administration in Jamaica, which is busy with the task of constructing our first budget, we are painfully aware of the additional burden caused by the social and economic costs of the epidemic, especially the negative effects on the health sector. In many low- and middle-income countries, road traffic injuries account for half of the hospital-bed occupants of surgical wards. In such scenarios, the most affected are usually the poorer groups within the society, including many whose historical claims for just compensation are yet to be addressed.

The plight of children in all of this deeply affects me. Article 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child articulates, inter alia, that children have the right to life and that Governments should ensure that children survive and develop in a healthy manner. The data are particularly startling, as they indicate that this right, especially in low- and middle-income countries, is constantly under siege. For our youth aged 10 to 24 years, road traffic injuries have become the number-one cause of death. Daily, 1,049 of our youth die from injuries sustained on the world's roads network. That means that, worldwide, every one to three minutes, a child perishes from a road accident.

If indeed Governments are to ensure that children survive and develop healthily, leaders must admit that road traffic injuries are seriously challenging their ability to deliver on this essential right of the child. They must take the bold steps necessary to confront their lethal impact on our societies.

When set against the background of struggling economies, record-high oil prices and the subsequent upsurge in food costs, the effects on the poor and needy present a major challenge for many Governments across the world. The plight of the poor becomes even more complicated, because those who are unable to afford automobiles are the most vulnerable on the roadways, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Thus in Jamaica, we have a situation in which, consistently for that last 20 years, pedestrians account for 33 per cent of all road fatalities. The larger category of vulnerable road users — pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists — accounts for 66 per cent of fatalities. In many countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, pedestrians account for as much as 50 per cent of road fatalities. The very limited funding available does not allow the privilege to adequately plan for the road users at that level.

What makes this carnage on our roads even more challenging is that the lower and middle-income countries, which are least equipped to deal with this crisis, account for 90 per cent of road traffic injuries. That presents a serious impediment to our efforts to achieve sustainable development and has a negative impact on our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Preliminary estimates indicate that Jamaica's accident emergency costs amounted to $14 million in 2006. That represented 0.48 per cent of our gross domestic product; 7.2 per cent of the budget allocated to hospitals; and 0.33 per cent of our national budget. That is an economic drain, in our situation, in which scarce resources would be better spent in areas of development. We need to actively seek to spend those dollars on preventative interventions, where they are an investment rather than an expense.

Of significant note too, is that this modern day plague is almost invisible. It is, indeed, very tragic, as it silently undermines the overall quality of life, and that silence must be broken.

I close this presentation with three recommendations. The first one has emerged from the multi-sectoral collaboration that we have fostered in Jamaica relating to the need to adopt standards for the design and manufacture of imported vehicles. One of the great contributions towards reducing the rate of motor vehicle deaths in the highly developed countries has been the development of such standards. In Europe and the United States, for example, government regulations require that vehicles protect passengers and other road users with enhanced environmental performance standards; front- and side-airbag impact protection; roll-over protection; three-point seat belts; and a growing list of designs and devices that help passengers avoid crashes and survive when crashes do occur.

Unfortunately, many of the low- and middle-income countries — where the great majority of road traffic deaths occur — do not currently have the capacity to enforce such standards. In Jamaica, about 48 per cent of road fatalities involve motor vehicle occupants, many of them as passengers in vehicles that would not meet the minimum standards for the United States or the European Union. A truly global standard that manufacturers are obliged to comply with would go a long way towards protecting the citizens of countries like Jamaica, where this standard could be legally adopted and used to screen vehicles imported to our shores. Jamaica has recently had costly experience in terms of serious injuries and fatalities from the importation of defective used vehicles, a situation that needs to be quickly and seriously remedied. I therefore call for the establishment of a global motor vehicle safety standard that would establish the minimum standard for vehicles manufactured anywhere in the world, and I hope that the United Nations global ministerial conference will address that.

Secondly, I make an urgent plea for Jamaica and other countries in the region to have easier access to the International Road Assessment Programme for risk-mapping and tracking the safety performance of the road network. That assessment will provide us with the protocols for measuring risk, setting benchmarks and utilizing a star rating that gives a road protection score. I am particularly interested in that initiative, as it relates directly to my ministerial portfolio. I look forward to the day when we can strengthen our safety management capacity in conformity with agreed principles and best practices, of course with the required assistance.

Jamaica is working to get out of the mindset of constructing roads without due attention to the safe use of the facilities. Accordingly, we are numbered among the nations that are signatory to the Make Roads Safe petition. Our previous Prime Minister was therefore the first signatory, and our current Prime Minister has affixed his signature since assuming office.

Thirdly and finally, our experience at the national and regional levels has taught us the critical importance of employing multi-sectoral collaboration in addressing this epidemic of road traffic injuries. Dire projections have been made about the devastation that will occur if we do not take action quickly and act together to fight this modern-day scourge.

The proposal for a United Nations global ministerial conference therefore provides the perfect opportunity for the international community to mobilize the leaders in the transport sector. It will also serve to focus our minds on practical solutions that can make a lasting difference and create the opportunity for enhanced leadership, which can assist in reducing the devastation now taking place in the developing world. That is against the background of the chilling data that every one to three minutes a child dies from a road accident; that is not just information found in a research document, but the reality faced by countless families and communities.

On behalf of the Prime Minister and people of Jamaica, I therefore express our full support for the draft resolution to be adopted this morning, calling for the first ever United Nations ministerial conference on road safety, and hope that it will receive overwhelming endorsement from the international community.

I look forward to the day when the nations of this planet can turn the tide and reap the benefits of safer travel on our roadways. Our concerted actions today with the adoption of this draft resolution will serve to further solidify a global partnership of collaboration and cooperation, which I know will overcome all impediments to achieving that endeavour.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Slovenia, Her Excellency Ms. Sanja Štiglic.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

Traffic collisions are at epidemic levels in many countries, and there seems to be a widespread acceptance that they are an inevitable consequence of ever-increasing mobility. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that in 2002 almost 1.2 million people died in road crashes worldwide, and as many as 50 million were injured. Failure to act could not only double the number by 2020, but would see injuries from road traffic rise to be the third highest contributor to the global burden of disease and injuries. Nonetheless, many societies and Governments have chosen to face this challenge. Indeed, mentalities are changing with regard to road safety: road accident fatalities are no longer accepted as an inevitable corollary of increased mobility.

In the EU, we can look to the successes of countries such as the United Kingdom, Sweden and the Netherlands. Against the background of rising vehicle numbers and increases in driver numbers, those States have recorded dramatic reductions in road casualty levels. In parallel to those success stories, other European countries have also achieved considerable improvements. It is important to underline that those successes are generally based on the adoption of wide-ranging planned approaches to road safety policy with ambitious targets.

In fact, the EU has recognized that there is scope for greater advances if all of the member States are prepared to share not just a vision for the future but also the best practice that has delivered such progress at the national level in the past. Referring to recent developments in that regard, the European Commission has issued a mid-term review of the European Road Safety Action Programme, expressing that we have accomplished a lot in the last five years, yet more must be done together to achieve our objectives. The European Road Safety Action Programme, established by the European Commission in June 2003, has at its core the goal of achieving a reduction of 50 per cent in the number of people killed in traffic collisions by 2010 as compared to 2001.

The European Parliament and the Council of European Ministers of Transport have, on several occasions, subscribed explicitly to that goal. In doing so, they have placed road safety very high on the political agenda, where it will remain, since they have also acknowledged that improving road safety requires a continuous effort.

The Programme identifies excessive speed, drinking and driving, and not using protective measures, such as seat belts and motorcycle helmets, as the main causes of collisions and as major contributing factors to their effects. For that reason, it underlines the urgent need for stricter enforcement of existing legislation in that respect. Furthermore, the Action Programme provides European States with an overview of the relevant information that is required in order to achieve the goal of a 50-per cent reduction of road accident fatalities. It also describes structures through which we can better address those issues and provides the information required to replicate the performance of those States which have taken the lead in road safety policy.

The Programme also places great emphasis on the absolute need to engage civil society in the delivery of better road safety. To that effect, it encourages the signing of a road safety charter by actors from the public and private sectors, in which those actors should list their individual aims and actions concerning road safety.

The EU Action Programme also places great emphasis on the need to gather collision data and information relating to collision prevention programmes deployed in each of the member States. That will be achieved through the establishment of the European Road Safety Observatory, which shall disseminate information on best practices in addressing road safety challenges.

Of course, it is clear that we should exchange best practices across all nations worldwide, not just within the European Union. We can all learn from the relevant experience of other nations in that context. To meet that challenge, we highly appreciate the initiative of the Russian Federation to host and provide the necessary financial support for the first global high-level conference on road safety, to be held in 2009, to bring together delegations of ministers and

representatives to discuss and to exchange information and best practices.

The lack of visibility of road traffic injuries has a direct impact on political will to recognize and address the problem. Against that background, the EU established a European Road Safety Day. The first European Road Safety Day on 27 April 2007 was a day for young people to share experiences. It focused on the subjects of alcohol and drugs in traffic, training and education. The second road safety day, to be held on 13 October 2008 in Paris, will address the subject of road safety in our cities.

Having heard that the major contributing factors to road crashes and injuries are drunk driving, lack of helmet use, seat belt non-compliance, excessive speed and poor infrastructure design and management, we know that many of those deaths are preventable. That is why we must act together to take up the challenge to drastically reduce the numbers of our citizens who needlessly lose their lives on roads every day of every year.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the United Kingdom, His Excellency The Honourable Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, Chairman of the Commission for Global Road Safety.

Lord Robertson (United Kingdom): Today we have the opportunity to begin to turn the tide — a terrible tide of bloodshed on the world's roads. I carry with me at all times a small photograph of my road crash 32 years ago — a reminder of how lucky I am to be here today — but millions of others carry the injuries of road crashes throughout their blighted lives, and tens of millions of others who have died on the world's roads will carry nothing ever again.

That is why today matters. Today's debate in the General Assembly and the draft resolution before us can mark the moment when the world community looks out at the suffering and at the grief and at the cost of road crashes and decides to end it. That is in our power to do. We have the tools, we have the knowledge and we have the means. What we have to do now is act.

We have to act for Le Xuan Han, who died on a road in Ho Chi Minh City last month, just a few weeks before her ninth birthday, because she was not wearing a motorcycle helmet and because the rider who crashed into her family had been drinking. We have to do it for Mukela Mumbuna, a young and gifted Zambian woman who left behind her husband and five-month-old baby when she died in a bus crash caused by a speeding driver, and for Baligeya in Uganda, who lost a leg and therefore his livelihood when he was knocked down by a hit-and-run driver. After months in hospital, he now faces a future of constant pain and poverty, unable to provide for his family again. No crash helmet; inappropriate speed; drunken driving — collectively we know how to tackle those problems. Unsafe vehicles; badly designed roads; no seat belt — those are all solvable problems.

Most of those present will know me as an individual from jobs that I have held in the past, as the Minister of Defence of the United Kingdom and then as the leader of NATO, the world's most successful defence alliance. They will know that I spend most of my time preoccupied with the statistics, casualties and consequences of military conflicts worldwide, and most of them will know some basic statistics about some of the best-known conflicts. The number who died in Viet Nam is known by every United States citizen; the number of casualties in Afghanistan is known by every Russian citizen; and concerning your country, Sir, we are all too aware of the casualties of the conflict going on in Iraq today.

And yet all of those figures are dwarfed by the carnage that takes place on the world's roads every day of every year. We know about some of those casualties; it is time that we acted on the day-to-day misery that is being created on our roads in our countries today. We must act for all the millions of people who have been killed or left maimed in this decade alone; for the 500 children who die every day, leaving their parents with a grief that we only imagine; and for the millions of lives that we could save in the decades ahead if we implemented the policies and solutions that are proved to work — that are proved to save lives and to make the roads safer.

So I am delighted that the General Assembly is supporting the recommendation of the Commission for Global Road Safety — which I am proud to chair — in our report *Make Roads Safe*, to organize the first ever global United Nations ministerial conference on road safety. I also welcome recognition by the Assembly for the work that is being done by the World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility and for the need for road safety to become an integral element of road infrastructure project design.

I would also pay tribute to the Sultanate of Oman and Ambassador Al-Hinai for leading the effort to secure a new United Nations resolution. I also want to thank the Government of the Russian Federation and General Kirianov for generously offering to host the ministerial conference next year and for their leadership in global road safety. I want to thank all of the countries that have supported this draft resolution and will be vital to the success of the forthcoming United Nations conference, and particularly the Government of the United Kingdom, which has sponsored this draft resolution and allowed me to speak on its behalf today.

I would like to thank President Arias of Costa Rica, former United States President Carter, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mrs. Mary Robinson of Ireland and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi of India, who are among those who have joined me in signing an Open Letter to the United Nations urging action today.

I also recognize Michelle Yeoh, Jean Todt and David Ward of the FIA Foundation, who are here with me today at this momentous General Assembly meeting. And I ask the Assembly to take note of the more than one million people across the world who have cared enough to sign the petition to the United Nations urging action.

This effort — this huge effort — will require both political will and public support. It is a challenge that we need to face together, the rich and the poor, the North and the South, the developed and the less developed worlds. And the United Nations ministerial conference will be an important milestone in this effort — a chance to come together, to review progress, to share knowledge, but most of all, to plan the action ahead of us. Today we can begin to turn the tide.

We, the United Nations, can determine to recognize the scale of this modern global epidemic of road deaths and injuries, and we can decide that the time has come to act to stop it.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico, Mr. Arturo Cervantes Trejo, General Director of the National Centre on Accident Prevention.

Mr. Trejo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Assembly for the privilege of addressing this sixty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Allow me also to convey greetings from the President of Mexico, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, and from the Minister of Health of Mexico, Dr. José Ángel Córdoba Villalobos.

Mexico is no stranger to the problem of road safety and road traffic injuries, which affect countries throughout the world. Every year, road traffic injuries are responsible for the deaths of more than 17,000 Mexicans, which is the equivalent to losing 47 people a day. Fifteen of them are pedestrians, which is a group at particularly high risk. Alarmingly, road traffic accidents are the number one killer of children, teenagers and young adults between the ages of 5 and 35 in our country.

Apart from these high death rates, road accidents have resulted in more than 750,000 hospitalizations, and many millions of injured have required medical attention. Road injuries are the second leading cause of permanent disability and also the second leading cause of orphanhood in our country.

In our country, the number of road accidents is on the rise, with official figures placing the growth in the number of accidents at more than 45 per cent in the current decade.

Estimates place the economic burden of road traffic injuries in Mexico at more than $100 million per year. Of these, $45 million is the estimated costs of hospitalization, surgery, medical treatment and rehabilitation services. Material damages are estimated at $13 million, and more than $35 million is due to the drop in productivity, the loss of income that the deceased, who are economically active members of society, would have produced. Their average age at death is 35.

Victims of traffic accidents are mostly people who are starting their families. They tend to have these accidents at a time when they are most productive economically. Thus, the consequences for families, communities, the economy and the country as a whole, are devastating.

The epidemic of traffic injuries in Mexico is compounded by many social, economic and cultural factors. Among them, the country is becoming largely urban, with more than 80 per cent of the population living in urban areas. In addition, the vehicle fleet, including motorcycles, trucks and buses, has increased

in size by more than 60 per cent in the last decade, standing at more than 24 million motor vehicles.

Research presented at the ninth World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion, held in the second week of this month of March in the city of Merida, Mexico, suggests that the high rate of pedestrian road traffic deaths in large cities is not just a problem of the developing world, but also in the most developed countries. So we need to do a better job of protecting vulnerable road users in all of our cities.

Alarmingly, it is important to mention the estimated number of accidents, injuries, disability and deaths related to motor vehicle traffic accidents tend to be much higher than official statistics would show. That is true both in Mexico and in other countries of the region, because of the significant underreporting of road traffic accidents and the casualties that result therefrom.

According to data from the World Health Organization and the World Bank, traffic injuries now constitute a true global epidemic, and Latin America and the Caribbean have the highest road traffic fatality rates of any region in the world.

The economic burden, as was mentioned by the Minister of Costa Rica and the Minister of Jamaica, is very high and climbing. Some of the problems that contribute to this pandemic in the region are associated with the increased urbanization of the population, the increased availability and use of motor vehicles, including a substantial increase in motorcycles, poor quality of roads, streets and highways, the absence of road safety education for all types of transport and road users, as well as the lack of sustainable mass transportation systems and adequate urban planning, among other causes.

Mexico, therefore, recognizes with concern that all countries of the world must confront this problem together. It is essential that all countries share knowledge and efforts regarding road safety and bring together all our knowledge and our scientific, technical, human and economic resources to face this pandemic in a well-coordinated global effort. It is a matter not only of economics, but also of social justice.

I should say that encouraging things are taking place in the Latin America and Caribbean region, in that we are beginning to work together, as the representatives of Costa Rica and Jamaica have already pointed out. In September 2006 at San José, Costa Rica, we held the first regional Road Safety Stakeholders Forum, at which a significant number of institutions — including the World Bank, the Pan American Health Organization, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Inter-American Development Bank and the FIA Foundation — demonstrated genuine leadership and united to raise awareness and take action on the very important issue of road safety. Thanks to that collaborative effort and the leadership of those institutions and a number of key individuals, the region has begun to mobilize multisectoral efforts to promote road safety in the region.

As previous speakers have mentioned, a Transitional Commission was established following that first meeting of key stakeholders in Costa Rica. Nobel Peace Prize laureate President Oscar Arias Sánchez is the honourary president of the Commission. Members of the Transitional Commission include the founding institutions to which I have referred and governmental and civil society representatives from across the region.

In December 2007, the second regional Forum of Road Safety Stakeholders was held in Puerto Rico. A large number of key regional officials representing Governments and institutions met with one common goal, namely, to reduce the number of people injured and killed on our streets and highways. Participants also shared a common vision: safe roads in Latin America and the Caribbean. Along with those regional stakeholders, Mexico has been an active participant working towards a regional approach to road safety in order to promote cooperation, pool resources and share knowledge to speed up the development of national capacities to promote road safety.

Mexico is proud to inform the General Assembly that, for the first time in the region, two weeks ago, on 14 March, at Mérida, we held a ministerial meeting on violence and injury prevention. That event took place on the eve of the ninth World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion. Twenty-nine countries of the Americas met at that unprecedented meeting of health ministers to discuss the issue of both intentional and unintentional injuries. Participating countries agreed that additional efforts were needed to address those major public health issues. They also committed themselves to taking significant steps to respond to this regional pandemic.

The ministerial meeting at Mérida resulted in the signing of the Ministerial Declaration on Violence and Injury Prevention in the Americas by more than 24 countries. We will provide a copy of the Declaration to the General Assembly for its records. The 24 signatory countries committed themselves to important steps that will help us to improve road safety in the region. Those steps included recognizing that injuries constitute a priority public health problem and that we need to intensify regional prevention efforts. They also committed themselves to develop, implement and evaluate national injury-prevention plans, as well as to encourage the establishment of strategic agreements and alliances in order to develop national policies on the prevention of injuries. Moreover, they committed themselves to strengthening or establishing injury-prevention units within their ministries of health offices that are endowed with appropriate budgets, staff and authority. Signatories also agreed to strengthen data collection efforts on injuries and to improve the provision of health care services to victims of injuries.

Mexico worked very closely with the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization in planning and preparing for the ministerial conference. We would like to thank both of them for their leadership in promoting road safety, as well as for the ongoing technical support they provide us.

As underscored in the draft resolution we are debating today, Mexico is participating actively with the World Health Organization in the preparation of the global road safety status report now under way. Mexico has been chosen to be part of a new effort by the World Health Organization to develop pilot policies and programmes aimed at preventing the needless loss of life on the streets and roads of our planet. The World Health Organization has received financing from the Bloomberg Family Foundation, which will help to significantly decrease the number of persons killed, injured or left disabled as a result of traffic accidents. That is an area of public health that has received very little funding in recent years.

In order to augment the resources being provided by the Bloomberg Family Foundation and the World Health Organization, the Mexican Government has decided to invest double the amount we are receiving in the pilot programmes that have begun to operate in four of the main cities of our country. Those programmes are aimed at tackling such important risk factors as driving while intoxicated, the use of seat belts and child restraints in vehicles, speed control initiatives and pedestrian road safety issues.

An unprecedented national programme on road safety was recently launched by our Minister of Health. Our National Centre for Injury Prevention, which I have the honour to lead, has been granted a significant budget and appropriate human resources to carry out road safety initiatives at the national level. We hope to be able to share our positive results and experiences in the area of road safety at the 2009 global ministerial conference.

Mexico's Ministry of Health has demonstrated strong support because we believe that the health sector can contribute to improving road safety in various ways. First of all, our public health initiatives are focused on prevention, although we do not ignore the areas of emergency medical treatment, hospitalization, long-term care and rehabilitation. We are focused on prevention. Our approach to public health is based on science. It is an intrinsically collaborative approach that highlights the need for a multisectoral focus, which we hope will characterize the first global ministerial conference on road safety that has been proposed for November 2009 in the Russian Federation.

Mexico strongly supports this draft resolution on improving global road safety, which was introduced today by the representative of Oman. We agree that we need to build greater political will and to implement the recommendations of the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* and the resolutions of the General Assembly on improving global road safety.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): At the outset I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his note transmitting the report on the implementation of resolution 60/5, on improving global road safety (A/62/257). I would also like to use this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Government of the Sultanate of Oman for taking the initiative to bring attention to the important issue of the global road safety crisis. He may be assured of our full support, for no countries are immune to this modern scourge, even islands far away from other countries.

The statistics in the report tell a grim story. Every year, nearly 1.2 million people die in traffic accidents and millions more are injured or disabled. Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death globally for

those between the ages of 10 and 24. That figure is comparable to death rates from malaria or tuberculosis.

To a large extent, the solution to the problem involves raising awareness and persuading motorists to change their behaviour. In other words, road traffic injuries can be prevented.

Unlike many other countries, the large majority of road accident fatalities in Iceland do not occur in cities. Indeed, the accident rate in built-up areas has declined significantly over recent years, and now statistics show that last year over 90 per cent of road accidents in Iceland occurred in the countryside. The concern in Iceland is that actions to reduce the number of those severely injured in traffic accidents have failed to show results. Studies have confirmed other findings that attribute road accidents to a number of key factors: speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, failure to use seat belts and poor infrastructure.

In light of this information, the Icelandic Ministry of Transport, Communications and Municipal Affairs has developed a four-year traffic safety plan, for the years 2007 to 2010, which was adopted by the Icelandic parliament in 2007 as a part of the general transport policy plan. The main aim of the traffic safety plan is to take action against driving under the influence of alcohol and/or substances and against speeding and not wearing seatbelts, as well as to introduce measures to improve road infrastructure and other tasks specified in the plan. The plan places special emphasis on road safety education for all children from preschool to 18 years of age. The aim of the project is that the children will enjoy comprehensive road safety education that will lay the foundation for responsible traffic behaviour and thereby challenge the notion that road accidents are unavoidable.

Icelandic authorities noted with special interest the announcement of the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week, 23 to 29 April 2007, which was dedicated to young road users. It was implemented in an effective manner in Iceland, with a variety of programmes taking place throughout the week. Interestingly, figures showed a sharp decline in road traffic accidents during the Road Safety Week compared to the same week the year before, and the same trend continued the weeks after.

The success of the United Nations Global Road Safety Week in Iceland was mainly due to successful collaboration among interested parties, such as the Government, the police, non-governmental organizations, local authorities and the media. The United Nations initiative to organize the Road Safety Week worldwide underlines the value and significance of international cooperation in the area, especially with regard to efforts to be undertaken in the developing countries.

Iceland is proud to be a sponsor of the draft resolution A/62/L.43 on global road safety, introduced earlier today by my friend Ambassador Fuad Al-Hinai. We highly value his proactive and constructive role in bringing this important issue to the attention of the United Nations.

Road traffic injuries continue to be an important public health and development issue. They threaten to undermine the development gains in many countries and impose a huge economic burden on developing countries. We must therefore intensify our international efforts to raise awareness about global road safety.

Iceland warmly welcomes the offer by the Russian Federation to host and provide the necessary financial support for the first global high-level conference on road safety, to be held in 2009. Such a conference should complement national and regional efforts to promote road safety and bring together transport, infrastructure and health ministers. It will play an important role in scaling up the political and institutional response to global road safety.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): I would first like to thank the Secretary-General for transmitting the report entitled "Improving global road safety" (A/62/257) to the General Assembly for consideration. I would also like to thank the World Health Organization (WHO) for preparing this report in consultation with partners of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration. Our special thanks go to the delegations of Oman and the Russian Federation for their relentless efforts in drafting the resolution on improving global road safety, which my delegation is honoured to co-sponsor.

We are encouraged by the considerable collaborative efforts that have been made at the national, regional and international levels to address road safety since the adoption of resolution 60/5 in October 2005. However, we are alarmed by the report

that this year road traffic injuries continue to be a major health problem and a leading cause of death, injury and disability around the world, with nearly 1.2 million people losing their lives and millions of others being injured and disabled. Those injuries constitute not only a major health concern, but are also a threat to the hard-earned development achievements in many countries.

The annual costs of road traffic crashes in low- and middle-income countries are estimated to be between $65 billion and $100 billion — more than the total amount received in development aid. The regret here is that, as suggested by WHO, such tragic road traffic injuries could largely have been prevented and controlled through rational analysis and counter-measures.

Viet Nam has always been among the countries in the spotlight whenever the issue of road traffic safety is raised. Given its high population density, fast urbanization process and continuously high economic growth rates resulting in a rapid increase in the numbers of vehicles on the road, Viet Nam's transport infrastructures failed to develop accordingly.

Awareness of road users remained low with regard to observance of traffic safety legislation. Consequently, the number of road traffic accidents went up sharply. Official statistics showed that in 2007 there were approximately 15,000, making up 96 per cent of traffic accidents of all types. Most deaths and injuries occurred to people between age 15 and 49, who account for 56 per cent of the total population and who are the most economically active. A study by the Asian Development Bank conducted only from an economic perspective estimated that in 2002 and 2003, traffic accidents in Viet Nam cost the country close to $900 million per year.

Deeply conscious of the tremendous consequences of road traffic accidents, especially the links between road safety and sustainable development, the Government of Viet Nam has attached great importance and given high priority to the issue of road safety. The National Strategic Plan for Traffic Safety Improvement 2001-2010 was designed to upgrade the transport infrastructure system; develop a legal system relevant to ensuring traffic safety; establish a traffic accident database; put in place information, education and communication campaigns; involve all governmental and non-governmental, national and local organizations in road traffic safety; set up a vehicle safety inspection system; and carry out strict enforcement measures. A series of policies and mechanisms have been introduced to provide incentives for good practices and impose sanctions against violations. The National Traffic Safety Committee was established as the inter-agency governmental body responsible for leading and coordinating the implementation of national road safety plans among various ministries and localities. Last year saw the first United Nations Global Road Safety Week observed in Viet Nam, with diverse information, education and communication activities conducted and safety regulations and law enforcement tightened.

All those efforts combined have brought about certain initial positive results. Here, due to time constraints, allow me to give the Assembly just one example of such a result: the reduction in the levels of head trauma caused by accidents involving motorcycles, the most popular means of personal transport in Viet Nam.

By October 2005, Viet Nam had around 16 million registered motorcycles, or approximately one for five people. In 2005, 70 per cent of the road crashes involved motorcyclists, and 88 per cent of the associated death tolls resulted from head trauma. Data from Cho Ray Hospital, the largest hospital in the largest and most populated city of the country, Ho Chi Minh City, show that 85 per cent of its traffic-related patients were motorcyclists and nearly 74 per cent of its traffic-related hospitalizations were due to head injuries.

Therefore safety for motorcyclists through helmet-wearing has been considered a policy issue of top priority by the Vietnamese Government. All possible means, including education, publicity campaigns, law enforcement, have been employed in order to raise helmet-wearing levels. A real breakthrough was made when Government resolution No. 32 was endorsed, according to which, starting on 15 December 2007, helmet-wearing became mandatory on all roads in Viet Nam. The three and a half months since then represent a very short time, and I do not have concrete figures yet about the improvement of the traffic safety situation. However, as a witness of the surprisingly strict observance of that resolution throughout the country, I can assure the Assembly of

the visibly and significantly lower rates of deaths among traffic accidents.

The credit for all of that goes to many players: the Government, with its political will; the people, with their increased awareness and improved sense of compliance with the law; the private sector, with its initial yet energetic involvement; and the people's organizations, with their innovative and flexible participation.

Last but certainly not least, the foreign factor has an extremely important role to play here. Over the past years, we have worked closely with and received valuable financial and technical assistance from many international partners, among them the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and WHO, to name but a few. Many non-governmental and civil society organizations, including the Asia Injury Prevention Foundation, Handicap International, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and its French and American member societies, have been active in Viet Nam, bringing fruitful cooperation and assistance to us. In the helmet-wearing campaign alone, which I just mentioned, we have enjoyed organic collaboration from many international organizations and individuals, most notably the Global Road Safety Initiative, the Asia Injury Prevention Foundation, and movie star Michelle Yeoh, the Goodwill Ambassador of the International Automobile Federation.

Allow me to avail myself of this opportunity to express the profound gratitude of the Vietnamese Government and people to the international community for its noteworthy contributions to addressing traffic problems in Viet Nam. In this connection, I would also like to express our appreciation and support to the offer by the Government of the Russian Federation to host, in 2009, the first global ministerial conference on road safety, and to state that we look forward to positive practical results from that major event.

As we look ahead, road traffic safety remains an issue fraught with huge challenges, demanding synergetic global efforts. We in Viet Nam are committed to doubling our efforts in developing and effectively implementing road safety programmes and action plans. In doing so, we shall use the "World report on road traffic injury prevention" and the draft resolution on improving global road safety, to be adopted, I believe, by the Assembly at its current session, as the framework within which to reach the target of a 5 to 7 per cent reduction of deaths involving traffic accidents by 2010, as outlined in Decision No. 259 that our Prime Minister signed earlier this month, on 4 March 2008. We again sincerely express the hope that Viet Nam will continue to receive highly needed cooperation and assistance from the international community.

Mrs. Sahussarungsi (Thailand): I should like to join the distinguished representatives who have spoken before me in expressing my delegation's appreciation to the President for bringing the critical issue of global road safety to the attention of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I wish to commend Oman for its long-standing dedication to global road safety. My delegation also expresses appreciation to the Government of the Russian Federation for taking the lead by offering to host the very first high-level global conference on road safety in 2009. That upcoming high-level conference will indeed raise to new heights the level of attention and awareness of the international community with respect to the global road safety crisis. This is rightfully deserved, since each year more than 1.2 million people are killed and 50 million injured on the world's roads.

It is my delegation's firm belief that, despite the devastating nature of this global epidemic, which kills people on a scale comparable to that of malaria and tuberculosis, road traffic deaths and injuries can be prevented and scaled down with vigorous and sustained efforts from all stakeholders at both the national and international levels.

Road crashes are now the leading cause of death worldwide for children and young people aged between 10 and 24. Alarmingly, more than half of road traffic casualties worldwide are in the 15-44 age group, which is the key wage-earning and child-raising group. The *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* of 2004 projected that, by 2020, the crash death rate in low- and middle-income countries will increase by 80 per cent if nothing substantial is done. The multiplier effects of traffic deaths and injuries can be disastrous and pose grave threats in terms of family loss, human resources, and economic and social loss for the countries as a whole. The economic burden for developing economies from that crisis has amounted to 1 to 2 per cent of gross national product in most countries each year. The annual cost of road traffic

crashes in low-income and middle-income countries is estimated at between $65 billion and $100 billion. That is by no means insignificant, as those economic costs could impact negatively on the social and economic development efforts of many countries.

In that connection, I would like to commend the World Health Organization (WHO) for its role as the coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system. The Secretary-General's report in document A/62/257, prepared by WHO, captures well the progress made in improving global road safety in various aspects, particularly the collaboration between the United Nations regional commissions and other United Nations agencies and international partners to implement General Assembly resolutions 58/289 and 60/5, as well as the recommendations contained in the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*. Other important and useful deliberations include the launch of numerous awareness campaigns and advocacy activities and the development of good-practice guides on road traffic injury data collection and research. Such multi-stakeholder participation and measures will promote great success in our efforts to overcome the global road safety crisis.

Thailand attaches great importance to the issue of road safety and witnesses the loss of precious lives each day. In 2003, road crashes in Thailand accounted for 14,012 deaths and 79,692 injuries. The death toll and injuries peaked during the annual new year holidays in January and during Songkran, the traditional Thai new year holidays, in April. The majority of those injured are motorcyclists. About 30 per cent of road traffic crashes are alcohol-related. The issue of road safety is therefore high on our national agenda. The Road Safety Operation Centre headed by the Deputy Prime Minister was established in 2003 as the lead agency to oversee and coordinate the efforts of various sectors on road safety in an integrated manner to prevent and reduce road crashes and to raise road safety standards through the implementation of Thailand's national strategy on road safety.

The strategy encompasses the "five E's" components: first, law enforcement; secondly, engineering focused on improving road conditions; thirdly, educational information and participation; fourthly, emergency medical services; and fifthly, evaluation. The Centre also plans and implements the plan of action and encourages cooperation from Government agencies, private organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society. The successful key deliberations include the "Do Not Drink and Drive" campaign, a campaign to encourage wearing safety helmets, imposing mandatory requirements for wearing safety belts and enforcing speed limits, and engaging community participation in public education and awareness. Through relentless efforts from all sides, the number of deaths from road injury per year fell from 14,012 in 2003 to 12,492 in 2007, and the number of casualties during the Songkran festival holidays fell dramatically from 848 deaths and 52,058 injuries to only 361 deaths and 4,805 injuries in 2007.

Thailand believes that cooperation at the regional and international levels on global road safety can contribute greatly to the success of our common cause. For that reason, Thailand has participated in and acted upon recommendations from many forums, including the United Nations resolutions, the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*, the ministerial declaration on improving road safety in Asia and the Pacific, as well as the Phnom Penh ministerial declaration on road safety in the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Thailand proclaimed 2004 as the Year of Road Safety and organized various activities to complement the WHO's global road safety campaign. In April 2007, Thailand organized United Nations Road Safety Week, with a focus on young road users. Moreover, Thailand joined other Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) members in commemorating ACD Road Safety Day on 25 April 2007, which also complemented the United Nations Road Safety Week campaign. At the regional level, ASEAN has developed the five-year ASEAN Regional Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan (2005-2010), which will strengthen cooperation in the region and promote the safer use of roads.

For many countries, the lack of financial resources is a major obstacle to their efforts to increase road safety. Mobilizing resources is a challenge that requires greater attention from the international community. In that regard, Thailand welcomes the progress of the Global Road Safety Facility set up in 2006 under the World Bank, which has already received funding from many sources to support road safety implementation.

In conclusion, while global road safety remains a challenge, considerable progress has been achieved at the national and international levels. It is both a public health and a development issue, so it requires concerted efforts from all sectors of society and the world community as a whole to tackle and help make the use of roads safer for all.

Mr. Nikitov (Ukraine): At the outset, my delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made earlier by the delegation of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

We would like to thank the Secretariat for the report of the Secretary-General submitted under agenda item 46, "Global road safety crisis", which provides an update on the status of implementation of the recommendations made in General Assembly resolution 60/5 on improving global road safety.

Ukraine hopes that the collaborative advocacy efforts recently made at the international level have served to increase awareness about road safety at the national and international levels.

Rapid industrial development, based on progress in technologies, is a characteristic feature of the development that the world has seen in the last few decades. Undoubtedly, the development of the engineering industry is also a characteristic feature of world development. As a result, the stock of cars in the world is constantly growing.

The positive effects of this process on the development of society are indisputable. However, it also brings a substantial level of danger. As the use of different means of transportation becomes more widespread, the potential for human and material losses due to accidents increases.

Deaths as a result of car accidents and road traffic injuries constitute a significant and increasing threat to the health of the world's population. Until now, road safety has not been part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or the Millennium Declaration and often has not been included in the programmes for sustainable economic development.

There are obvious obstacles to achieving and maintaining road traffic safety regimes. The low technical capacities in many countries and the lack of qualified specialists in this area slow down the development and introduction of effective strategies and programmes regarding road safety. As a result, global problems of road safety are often missing as a priority public health issue in either national or regional policies. Limited investment in road infrastructure also contributes to the increase in the number of deaths and injuries resulting from road accidents.

Therefore, we call on all involved parties to expedite technical and financial assistance to strengthen and improve cooperation in the area of road safety, taking into account the needs of those most at risk. The development of a robust road infrastructure can also ensure wider employment opportunities, training of staff and public health improvement. It will increase the level of foreign investment in the economy.

Turning to my country specifically, Ukraine is facing the many challenges and threats of the global road safety crisis. Recently we have observed a significant increase in road traffic injuries as a result of road accidents. I would like to inform the Assembly that in response to this threat the President of Ukraine, Mr. Victor Yushchenko, and the Government of my country have initiated legislation designed to minimize the number of road accidents and to reduce injuries and loss of human life.

We will continue to spare no effort in increasing the level of responsibility for violations of traffic rules and regulations and in establishing an effective State system on improving road safety. In this regard, Ukraine welcomes the relevant provisions of the draft resolution before us (A/62/L.43), and, as one of its sponsors, looks forward to its effective implementation, especially at the level of the United Nations regional commissions.

Mr. Sen (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his note transmitting the comprehensive and useful report of the World Health Organization (WHO) on the global road safety crisis (A/62/257), prepared in accordance with resolution 60/5 of 26 October 2005. We would also like to express our appreciation to the delegation of Oman for its continuous efforts in support of this agenda item.

India attaches great importance to addressing the problem of road traffic safety. India has one of the largest road networks in the world, spanning more than 3.3 million kilometres. Road traffic has been increasing by more than 10 per cent per annum since the turn of the century. In addition, the share of road traffic in

total traffic has been growing steadily — currently, 65 per cent of freight and 86 per cent of passenger traffic is carried by road. Compounding the problem is the fact that, while our national highways constitute only about 2 per cent of the road network, they carry 40 per cent of the total road traffic, resulting in heavy traffic density.

India is also conscious of the serious development and national health impact of road accidents. India has been working actively to enhance road safety and to reduce the adverse consequences of traffic accidents. As the WHO report recommends, India already has a lead agency on road safety issues. The Department of Road Transport and Highways of India has been entrusted with the responsibility for formulating policies for road safety. It develops road safety standards in the form of a national policy on road safety and by preparing and implementing the annual road safety plan. Further, it collects, compiles and analyses road accident statistics and takes steps towards the development of a road safety culture in the country by organizing various awareness campaigns in collaboration with civil society.

India believes that there are three aspects of road safety — engineering, enforcement and education, or "the three Es" — and is taking action on all three aspects. A special Committee on Road Safety and Traffic Management was set up and its report is being examined. India has joined the 1998 Agreement of the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations in order to adopt international best practices in safety regulations of motor vehicles. Smart-card-based driving licences and vehicle registration certificates are now being issued in many parts of the country. Old laws and regulations are being reviewed and updated.

Extensive public awareness campaigns, involving non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, are organized periodically. Annual Road Safety Weeks are organized, with the nineteenth Road Safety Week being held recently from 1 to 7 January 2008 under the theme "Drive to care! Not to dare!" Awards are being given every year to institutions and individuals who have done commendable work in the field of road safety.

While many of the issues relating to enhancement of road safety and efforts to reduce road safety injuries are best tackled by national and local authorities, the WHO report correctly highlights the importance of facilitating international cooperation in this regard. Developing countries are the worst affected by the impact of road accidents and the imperative for increasing international cooperation to assist developing countries to effectively address issues of road safety cannot be overemphasized.

Issues of capacity-building, technical assistance, exchange of best practices, advocacy and awareness-raising are some of the areas where greater cooperation is required, taking into account the needs of developing countries. In this regard, we commend the efforts of WHO and the United Nations regional commissions, particularly the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Mobilization of financial resources to assist efforts of developing countries is also crucial. While the WHO report identifies some funding facilities, these are far from commensurate with the magnitude of the problem and need to be scaled up urgently, particularly with regard to country programme support. We also need to be cognizant of the fact that it is not always feasible to universalize standards that may have been developed in one region, and specific circumstances in various parts of the world must therefore be taken into account.

Given this scenario, we strongly support calls for an international conference on global road safety under the auspices of the United Nations in order to enhance international cooperation in this important field. We warmly welcome and thank the Government of the Russian Federation for its initiative in hosting and financing the first global high-level (ministerial) conference on road safety in 2009. We hope that this initiative will provide the necessary impetus towards the holding of a United Nations conference on global road safety in the future.

Before concluding, I would like to express our satisfaction that the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration is "walking the talk" by improving the fleet safety within the organizations that are participants in this Collaboration, including the United Nations. This is an innovative approach that could perhaps be adopted by large corporations.

Mrs. Altimova (Kazakhstan): We are very grateful for this opportunity to add our voice in today's debate on this very special and crucial item. At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for

transmitting the report contained in document A/62/257, on the issue of global road safety. We would also like to commend the efforts made by the Permanent Missions of Oman and the Russian Federation in the preparation of the draft resolution (A/62/L.43) on global road safety. My country very much appreciates the opportunity provided to us to join the list of sponsors of the draft resolution.

We are very concerned that the rates of injury and death caused by traffic accidents are rising in many countries and leading to deaths among people in the most productive age groups. Statistics showing that there are more than 1 million deaths and 50 million injuries annually as a result of traffic accidents led us to address this problem at the international level alongside such issues as the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the question of victims of armed conflict. However, despite the ominous statistics, there is a solution to this problem. Many countries have successfully overcome it by allocating more resources for the improvement of infrastructure. Some interventions require governmental commitment alone — such as the promulgation of relevant legislation pertaining to personal responsibility for safe driving.

Kazakhstan fully shares the global concern about the road safety crisis. We welcome the draft resolution before the Assembly, which would lay a foundation for further concerted actions by the international community to decrease the death toll on the roads.

Our most recent national statistics are alarming. In 2007, almost 24,000 people were the victims of traffic accidents. Almost 4,500 persons died, and about 19,000 were injured. All five of the risk factors referred to in the draft resolution contributed to those terrible statistics. Our vast territory, small population and uneven distribution of settlements — which makes maintaining infrastructure incredibly expensive — constitute additional negative factors.

Nevertheless, in his annual message to the people of Kazakhstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev identified the development of road infrastructure and the introduction of global road standards as priority goals. The Government of Kazakhstan recently adopted a national transportation strategy for the period 2006-2015 that includes an allocation of $26 billion in the budget to improve road infrastructure.

We are also undertaking some measures to combat the negative consequences of road accidents. Legislation to strengthen accountability for unsafe driving and to improve the system of emergency care is currently being revised by the Parliament of Kazakhstan. Moreover, our country has established partnerships with such entities as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Those partnerships allow us to learn about successful experiences and best practices.

We would like to express our full support for the draft resolution, whose provisions are in line with Kazakhstan's commitment to making road safety a contributing factor in our country's sustainable development. We also welcome the decision of the Russian Federation to host, and provide the necessary financial support for, the first global high-level ministerial conference on road safety.

Ms. Carter-Foster (United States of America): Every year, 1.2 million people around the world die on the roads — over 3,000 each day, a toll comparable to that of malaria or tuberculosis — and 30 to 50 million are left injured and/or disabled. Most of those deaths and disabilities occur in developing countries, where the losses take a significant toll on familial and national incomes, reduce gross domestic product by 1 per cent or more and exceed the funds received in development assistance.

Losses due to road traffic injuries are preventable. We should not take them for granted and we should not accept road crashes and their associated costs in human lives as the price we pay for mobility or for economic growth and development. In the words of the theme of the 2007 United Nations Global Road Safety Week, "Road safety is no accident".

The United States supports this draft resolution (A/62/L.43), which calls for a ministerial conference on global road safety to raise global awareness and to elevate the issue of road traffic deaths and injuries and their associated costs to an international dialogue on specific actions all nations can take to minimize this scourge around the world. Our nation has already done much in support of the recommendations contained in the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*, and we will continue to do more.

We have learned much through the years, in terms of both human and technological advancements, enabling us to reduce road injuries and deaths. Yet each year 43,000 lives are lost on our nation's roads.

Through human and technological advancements, we have learned much about effective strategies to prevent crashes and reduce road injuries and deaths. We are willing to share those lessons with others who might benefit from our experiences in the United States and around the world.

Achievements in reducing road traffic deaths will not come easily or quickly. It has taken the United States decades to curb the rise in motor vehicle deaths, which peaked in the late 1960s. It took time to build safer roads and cars and to educate and train drivers and pedestrians. United States Government agencies such as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and, most recently, the State Department have worked to advance the progress of global road safety efforts. In addition, non-government efforts, as exemplified by the work of active and passionate non-governmental organizations, have been instrumental in raising support for this issue.

Road safety impacts health, commerce, transportation and trade. It is an important economic development issue as well as a global safety concern. A ministerial conference will set into motion the collaboration needed by Governments, together with the international community and including partners in the non-governmental and private sectors, to reduce deaths and injuries on the roads. Under the leadership of the World Health Organization — working closely with health, transport, education and other national ministries, as well as the private sector — working cooperatively, we can achieve greater success, to be measured in thousands of lives saved.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening today's meeting on improving global road safety in order to take up the very informative report (A/62/257) transmitted by the Secretary-General. This is an important issue that affects the lives of people in every country in the world. Road traffic engenders dangers, particularly the accidents and the resulting injuries.

In Benin, the state of the transportation infrastructure, particularly the roads, quickly causes wear and tear on vehicles. Irregular and inadequate road signs and failure to meet technical standards for the often dilapidated vehicles, along with lack of respect for basic rules of the road due to the indiscipline and dangerous behaviour of users, all increase the risks of human failing. Furthermore, inadequate income leads to overuse and poor maintenance of vehicles. Those are some of the factors that greatly increase the risk of serious accidents in countries of the South, like Benin.

Additionally, the chances of surviving a serious car accident, one requiring urgent intervention, are almost nil in certain countries like mine. That is due in particular to the distance to hospitals, the absence of any on-the-ground rapid response mechanisms, the lack of qualified staff and many other aggravating circumstances, which combine to seal the fate of victims of road accidents.

Traffic on inter-State roads takes a heavy toll among those who live alongside them. Innumerable lives have been torn apart by the endless stream of vehicles in transit.

Improving mobility for people and goods is an essential element of our national growth strategy for reducing poverty, adopted by the Government of Benin last April. It includes a national strategy for improving road traffic safety. The Government means to ensure the proper maintenance of existing road networks, but also to improve the management of road safety and to protect against damage caused by traffic, taking into account noise, air pollution and physical risk for the users. We also seek to strengthen environmental management and road safety through improved policing of risky behaviour.

One can only welcome the attention that the United Nations Development Group is giving to improving road traffic safety. That is an area where cooperation among the transport, health and safety sectors can efficiently help to reduce the risks faced by road users and promote accident and injury prevention, as well as the treatment of injuries, as necessary.

Beyond awareness-raising activities, particular attention should be given to promoting the necessary investment to improve transportation infrastructure and to strengthen the capacities of the health sector to deal with emergency services and treat injuries. It is clear that the implementation of a strict traffic control policy by the security services is of crucial importance in developing countries like Benin.

In this regard, we should welcome the creation by the World Bank of the Global Road Safety Facility,

whose objective is to reduce death and injury from road accidents in low- or middle-income countries such as my own. We welcome the efforts by countries contributing to this Facility and invite those that have a vehicle-manufacturing industry to make regular contributions.

The question of financing this Facility must be examined as an essential issue at the high-level conference on road safety. It would be important that particular attention be given to road traffic in developing countries as part of an integrated approach to defining effective strategies for the promotion of road safety. Equally important would be defining the functional mechanisms for mobilizing the resources required for the implementation of those strategies.

My delegation aligns itself with the draft resolution before the Assembly. We hope that its adoption and implementation will allow us to ensure the proper preparation and success of the world conference planned for Moscow in 2009.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer for the Holy See.

Mr. Swanepoel (Holy See): My delegation would like to thank the delegation of Oman for its leadership on this important issue and the Russian Federation for its generous offer to host a high-level meeting on road safety next year.

Human mobility and the transport of goods date back to the earliest periods of human history. The advent of new technologies has ushered in an ever-increasing national and international movement of peoples and goods. At the core of this phenomenon is the human person, for whom, as an inherently social being, roads and vehicles are not merely means for transporting goods, but are a vital element for fostering greater social interaction across boundaries.

Nowadays road safety impacts not only peoples in the developed world; it touches all, regardless of geographic location or economic status. Unfortunately, this global increase in movement has been accompanied by a sad rise in vehicle-related accidents, causing property damage, injuries and deaths. The fact that over 3,000 people die every day and that a traffic-related injury occurs nearly every six seconds demonstrates how the need for greater road safety has become an issue of international concern.

This problem calls for local, national and international leaders to adopt proactive road safety measures, so that the increasing human mobility should not come at the expense of human life itself. Such measures can be effective only if backed by the necessary political, social and economic capital.

While technical measures are necessary to address road safety, focus must also be given to the human factor. People are prone to blame traffic accidents on poor infrastructure, equipment or road conditions. However, an overwhelming majority of vehicular accidents and deaths are linked directly to driver behaviour, such as excessive speed, aggressive driving, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and various forms of distraction.

Moreover, not only drivers, but also pedestrians should observe road safety rules and exercise due concern and care for others on the road.

As far back as 1956 and as recently as last year's document on road safety, the Holy See has constantly sought to educate drivers and other road users on their obligations and moral responsibilities, calling on them to respect traffic rules, observe speed limits, wear seat belts, avoid alcohol and, indeed, to take all road safety precautions.

My delegation welcomes the adoption of this resolution and looks forward to further discussions of this topic. We offer assurances of the Holy See's continued commitment to help improve road safety around the world.

The Acting President: In accordance with the resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Schulz (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): It has been ten years now since the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) devoted a special chapter of its annual World Disasters Report to road safety. That was the first international warning to be issued, the first time that anyone had said to the nations of the world: be aware, we are facing a major new public health crisis that will very rapidly assume the proportions of a disaster unless drastic, coordinated action is taken immediately.

Today, in 2008, road crashes rank up there with tuberculosis and malaria as major killers in global

terms and are the leading cause of death among people aged between 15 and 50, mainly in low- and middle-income countries. That is in spite of the fact that the most important measures that need to be taken are widely known. They are freely accessible and can be downloaded from the Internet. They are presented in the "World report on road traffic injury prevention". The question then is: why is progress not being made, as would seem imperative?

To start with, there is the fact that a lack of reliable data implies that the magnitude of the problem remains vastly underestimated and, besides human tragedy, the costs to societies and economies remain largely uncalculated. It is not just a question of new roads and new vehicles; it is also essential to ensure that roads incorporate safety features and that road users behave responsibly. Countries that have managed to lower road mortality have all done so by implementing the measures outlined in the world report.

It is those emergency measures, effective in any context, that we have set forth in a "Practical Guide on Road Safety: a Toolkit for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies". That Practical Guide, which is referenced in paragraph 19 of the report on improving global road safety (A/62/257), will help not only the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, but also the wider civil society in its work with the Government in order to scale up efforts to further improve road safety. The guide was jointly produced with the Global Road Safety Partnership, which is based at our IFRC Secretariat in Geneva.

That Practical Guide is a tool for action. It gives 20 clear recommendations and is available to the world through the Internet in four languages on the Federation's website: www.ifrc.org. It also acknowledges and commends the efforts undertaken by the United Nations family to address the problem, particularly the creation of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, led by WHO, in which the IFRC is also a partner.

Following that publication, we are now moving, with the Global Road Safety Partnership, towards a second phase, which will involve regional workshops around the world. The first will be in Doha in mid-May 2008. That will also emphasize the special role National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies can play as auxiliaries to their public authorities.

International advocacy for road safety has been making good progress since 2004, and this debate is evidence of some success. However, with rare exceptions, thus far donor countries have not included road safety in their international strategies for development cooperation, even though they consider it a priority challenge at home. There is certainly much room for change in that respect.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and their millions of volunteers are often the first to arrive on the scene of a road accident and to assist the victims. As witnesses, we urge all Governments to take the magnitude of this problem very seriously and to join in partnership to reverse the current deadly trend. We highly commend the Sultanate of Oman for its leadership in drafting this year's draft resolution on global road safety and very much appreciate and fully support the idea of holding a global inter-ministerial conference on road safety, to be hosted by the Russian Federation next year.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/62/L.43, entitled "Improving global road safety".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors: Afghanistan, Andorra, Cape Verde, China, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Sri Lanka and Zambia.

I give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Alves (Brazil): Brazil would like to join other delegations and also sponsor this important resolution.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/62/L.43?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 62/244).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 46?

It was so decided.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.50 p.m.